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ABSTRACT

An investigation was conducted to identify what components and thematic areas should be included in fund raiser training by analyzing fund raising position advertisements. A content analysis was performed on 307 advertisements in publications of the National Society of Fund Raising Executives (NSFRE) and other sources from 1988-1990 specifically addressing necessary professional experience, skill requirements, educational expectations, and organization type. The sample was randomly selected from the "NSFRE Employment Opportunities," St. Louis, Missouri, NSFRE chapter local position announcements, bulletins, and announcements printed in the "Non Profit Times." Organizational type categories included special interest non-profit organizations, religious institutions and agencies, hospitals, educational institutions, and private fund raising corporations. Results of the content analysis emphasized competence in fund raising skills or abilities followed by experience in the philanthropic community with formal education not identified as a major qualification in the sample. These characteristics, a combination of knowledge expectations and specific skills, provide a conceptual framework for future needs assessments related to fund raising executive training curriculum. Two dominant areas for concentrated study emerged: trade skills and office-related skills. These two skill areas, according to data, must be integrated with practical work experience. (Contains 18 references.) (JB)

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Characteristics of Development Officers: Implications for Fund Raiser Curriculum

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Abstract

This investigation was designed to examine the expectations of fund raising professionals, as defined by over 300 position announcements. A content analysis was performed on the announcements and results were used in constructing a conceptual framework for curriculum related to fund raising executive training.

Development in all sectors of society has grown rapidly since the mid-1970's, as evidenced by the continued increase in charitable contributions (Bailey, 1990; Bailey, 1989; Goss, 1989). Consequently, the demand for qualified fund raising executives has increased respectively (Ast, Moore, & Rook, 1987; Brakeley, 1980a). In the process, numerous professionals have called for training programs, certification, and other educational opportunities which will adequately prepare them for the duties to which they are assigned (Willard, 1984; Schneiter & Nelson, 1982; Brakeley, 1980a, 1980b). Additionally, these same professionals have demanded continuing education opportunities.

While these demands have been made, a series of responses have been developed by a variety of agencies and institutions to address educational concerns. Most notably, the National Society of Fund Raising Executives (NSFRE) Certified Fund Raising Executive (CFRE) program has met the need for continuing education of practicing professionals while simultaneously developing minimum competency standards for fund raisers. Educational institutions have also developed degree and non-degree academic programs for the preparation of future professionals. Vanderbilt University and Mankato State University both offer master's degree programs in institutional advancement, and George Washington University offers a certificate program for fund raisers. Harvard University also offers continuing education options through its Center for Lifelong Learning (Carbone, 1985). The Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) has also been lauded for its work with

the Summer Institute for Educational Fund Raising.

The curriculum constructs for these programs, however, have historically been isolated by the boundaries of the campus and from other disciplines on campus. An empirical needs assessment of what fund raisers need to know, and to identify what training programs need to address, has become crucial in maintaining a strong and vital profession (Schwartz, 1988). This investigation was designed to identify what components and thematic areas should be included in fund raiser training.

Characteristics of Development Officers

There is little consensus of what constitutes the ideal development officer, and much existing literature has been drawn from personal experience and has been anecdotal (Willard, 1984). Numerous attempts have been made, however, in defining who development officers are.

Early attempts at defining the fund raising executive provided for an individual committed to the cause, inspired by teamwork, and a strong communicator (Pollard, 1958). These same characteristics have been identified more recently with the addition of management skills and a sense for organizational behavior (Stuhr, 1985; Schneiter & Nelson, 1982; Brakeley, 1980b). Brakeley did stress, above all other characteristics, that the development officer should be motivated by "a real belief in the value of the organization's work" (p.18).

Brod (1986) outlined 13 specific traits to look for in a fund raising professional. While some of these were entirely

descriptive in nature, the list included: motivated by a belief in a cause; committed to working in the non-profit sector; high level of integrity; good knowledge of fund raising basics; committed to the profession; and the ability to influence and motivate others. The same type of listing was developed by Ast, Moore, and Rook (1986), but clustered into three categories: technical skills, human relations skills, and conceptual skills.

Nichols (1987) was able to draw on his 20 years of professional experience to develop a listing of 12 descriptors of the successful development officer. This listing included, among others, devotion to donors, ability to dream or envision the success of the office, an ability to design fund raising programs, decisiveness, and an ability to delegate.

In addition to these descriptive works, some have argued in favor of specifically designing each requirement based on institutional needs (Burdette, 1987; Matheny, 1987; Rowland, 1977). Each institution or agency in search of development officer must, these authors contended, assess institutional needs to determine the type of fund raiser needed. As each institution differs, development officer characteristics will be driven not by the profession, but rather, by the contextual nature of the agency.

Methods

To obtain a 'true' profile of the desired characteristics of fund raising professionals, 307 fund raising position advertisements from 1988-1990 were studied. We conducted a content analysis on these advertisements, specifically addressing necessary

professional experience, skill requirements, educational expectations, and organization type. The sample was randomly selected from the NSFRE Employment Opportunities, St. Louis NSFRE chapter local position announcement bulletins, and announcements printed in the Non Profit Times.

Organizational type was pre-structured based on five categories: special interest non-profit organizations, religious institutions and agencies, hospitals, educational institutions, and private fund raising corporations. The special interest non-profit organizations included environmental and cultural organizations, public service organizations, and political cause-related agencies.

Results

Categorical indications of organizational type were evident through agency and corporation title. Of the 307 advertisements, 57% (n=174) were classified as special interest non-profits; 20% (n=61) were for educational institutions, representing elementary, secondary, postsecondary, and higher education; 8% (n=25) were for religious institutions or religiously affiliated agencies; 7% (n=24) were for hospitals; 3% (n=9) were for private fund raising firms; and 5% (n=15) did not specify the type of organization seeking the fund raiser.

Experience: With these varying types of organizations, 45% (n=138) of the advertisements required the potential employee to have at least two to five years of fund raising experience. An additional 35% (n=109) simply required the candidate to be

"experienced" with no specific number of years in the profession, while other advertisements required six to ten years of experience (n=11) or less than two years experience (n=2). The remaining 15% (n=47) did not specify any requirement for experience in the fund raising profession.

Education: The majority of the advertisements did not mention any requirement for education (65%, n=200). A baccalaureate degree was required by 29% of the advertisements, and 5% required a master's or graduate degree, although the specific graduate degree field of study was not specified.

Skills: Each advertisement was examined to determine what skills were necessary for each position. These skill characteristics identified in the data fell into six categories: organizational capabilities, communication skills (written and verbal), management abilities, volunteer management, fund raising techniques, and grant writing. The fund raising techniques category arose in response to the different types of fund raising skills required by the different positions (e.g., instead of segregating each annual or deferred giving position into a separate category, a broader representation was achieved through the combination of different levels and types of positions).

Knowledge of a specific fund raising technique appeared in 48% of the advertisements (n=149), and strong communication skills, either written, verbal, or both, appeared in 47% of the advertisements (n=144). Management skills and volunteer management

were mentioned as requirements in 19% (n=58) and 10% (n=32) of the studied announcements, respectively. Organizational abilities and grant writing skills were both mentioned in 9% of the advertisements (n=29), and 4% of the advertisements (n=12) did not mention any skill as a requirement.

The results of the content analysis provided an indication of what fund raising executives could expect as career qualifications. Data emphasized competence in fund raising skills or abilities followed by experience in the philanthropic community. Formal education was not identified as a major qualification in the sample.

Curriculum Implications

Development has grown as a profession to unprecedented levels of need and sophistication. While on-the-job training may have once been adequate in preparing fund raising executives, the evolving role of philanthropy in American life dictates more and better training for those in the professions (Breslow, 1988). From the sampling of job advertisements studied, a profile of what fund raisers need to know has been developed. These characteristics, a combination of knowledge expectations and specific skills, provide a conceptual framework for future needs assessments related to fund raising executive training curriculum.

The results of the current investigation indicated two dominant areas for concentrated study: trade skills and office-related skills. Trade skills encompassed the abilities necessary for the fund raiser, such as knowledge of annual giving techniques

including direct mail appeals, telemarketing, giving clubs, parents associations, etc., volunteer management strategies, and grant writing. Fund raising professionals need to have various degrees of operational knowledge for each type of category or technique, suggesting a broad based approach to curriculum development. Office-related abilities for the development officer included sound management practices and beliefs, and to a lesser extent, strong organizational skills. These abilities included motivational techniques, personnel evaluation and performance review strategies, conflict resolution, etc.

The two skill areas, according to data, must be integrated with practical work experience. In an educational program this could be interpreted to be an internship and practicum type experience for students in various offices or divisions of a campus, such as human resources, faculty development offices, or student services. A rotational type experience for learners, providing exposure and experience in each area of a development program, could also satisfy an 'experience' requirement.

These results are suggestive of framework for understanding and developing curriculum and programs in fund raiser training. While literature maintains contextual requirements based on institutional needs, office and trade skills should be the primary focus of a training program. The natural outgrowth of the program should combine acquired knowledge with practical experience.

Insert Figure 1 Here

Program administrators must make an effort to determine the

organizational needs of the non-profits being served by the curriculum and may add or delete certain components or modules to the entire program. For example, specific training may be needed to fully understand the history and structure of academic institutions. This may enable fund raising practitioners to better tailor campaigns and programs at the institution's culture. Office management skills, currently offered in business schools and in career education programs, need to be addressed through formal coursework and experience. A similar approach is needed for fund raising skills, entailing techniques of fund raising, volunteer management, and grant writing.

As with many other models for curriculum development, the suggested framework is based on a developmental approach to student learning. The learner must address basic issues germane to selected cultures, must learn relevant behavior, and subsequently, must combine tacit knowledge with work experience.

As fund raising has grown, and continues to grow, there is and will continue to be a need to address the formal training of those involved in fund raising. The framework provided here has the potential to serve as a foundation for specific types of fund raising curriculum to be developed. Only through addressing the issues related to fund raiser training can educational institutions and the host of competing non-profit agencies begin to predict, with any degree of stability, future fund raising objectives and revenues.

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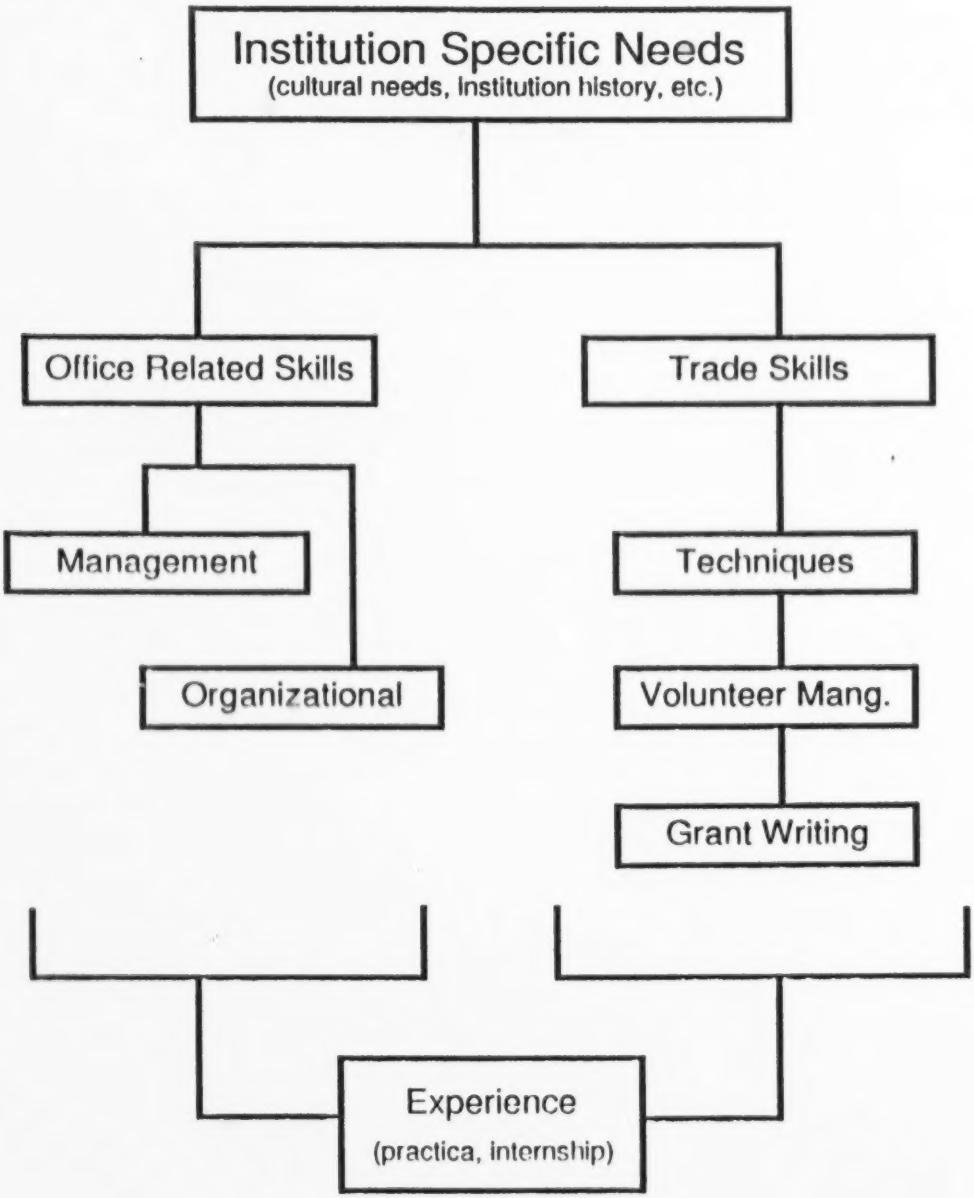
Figure Caption

Figure 1. A conceptual framework for fund raising executive training program and curriculum development.


Institution Specific Needs
(cultural needs, institution history, etc.)
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Techniques
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Volunteer Mang.
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(practica, internship)